

Young Adults in the Workplace Initiative

The primary purpose of the Young Adults in the Workplace (YIW) initiative, sponsored by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), is to study the efficacy of a diverse set of workplace-based substance abuse prevention and early intervention programs for employed young adults aged 16 to 24. Statistics from SAMHSA's annual National Survey of Drug Use and Health indicate that large numbers of employees in our workforce are using alcohol and drugs and need assistance with substance abuse problems.

Generation Y (born 1977 – 2002) is a cohort that now includes more than 70 million people and represents the fastest growing segment of today's workforce. In the coming decades, younger workers will comprise an even larger proportion of the overall U.S. workforce. This fact, coupled with the well-established fact that substance use prevalence peaks in the adolescent/young adult age range, has the potential to create important substance use-related challenges for employers. Unfortunately, however, there is currently virtually no empirical evidence that documents the efficacy of workplace-based substance abuse prevention and early intervention programs with young adults. The cross-site evaluation of this multisite, multiprotocol initiative will broaden SAMHSA's workplace prevention initiatives by generating empirically-based knowledge about a diverse set of interventions and how they function within a variety of workplace populations and contexts.

CSAP initially funded 13 grantees in Phase I of the YIW initiative and plans to fund a subset of these to continue into Phase II. The YIW cross-site evaluation planned for Phase II is designed to provide a comprehensive picture of how the YIW interventions were implemented, the effects they had on employees, and the value they provided to employers. To accomplish this, the cross-site infrastructure supports three interrelated evaluation efforts: a process evaluation, an outcome evaluation, and an economic evaluation.

The YIW program is designed to identify and disseminate findings and products that can inform workplaces regarding effective programs in substance abuse prevention and early intervention for young adults in the workplace. Over the course of this 5 year program, the collaborative will examine broadly the workplace response to substance abuse among youthful employees and study emerging issues to develop policy related to future needs of workplaces today and in coming years.